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AUTHOR Gouveia, Lourdes; Stull, Donald D.

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ABSTRACT

In 1988, IBP, the world's largest meat processing firm, announced it would open a beefpacking plant in Lexington, Nebraska. This was part of the latest wave of meatpacking restructuring which moved plants away from urban centers and union strongholds to rural communities. This paper examines community changes accompanying the opening of a large meatpacking plant and the arrival of Latinos, who comprise 70-80 percent of the plant's work force. Data from Nebraska Job Services, Social Services, Dawson County Register of Deeds, the U.S. Census, and Haven House, which provides temporary food and shelter to newcomers, were used to examine IBP hiring patterns, immigration patterns, general assistance benefits, social services requests, school enrollment and turnover, and job service applications. Interviews with newly arrived Latinos yielded information on household composition, education, English language skills, and work history. Interviews with established residents of Lexington provided baseline data and data concerning community attitudes towards IBP and socioeconomic changes associated with the plant. Recommendations for community residents and leaders in these "new" meatpacking communities include creating a positive context of reception for new immigrants, creating economic development beyond IBP, and building for a second generation. (Contains 40 references and 10 figures.) (TD)

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Latino Immigrants, Meatpacking, and Rural Communities: A Case Study of Lexington, Nebraska

by Lourdes Gouveia, University of Nebraska-Omaha
and
Donald D. Stull, University of Kansas

Research Report No. 26
August 1997

Produced by:
Julian Samora Research Institute
Michigan State University
112 Paolucci Building
East Lansing,
Michigan 48824-1110
(517) 432-1317
Fax: (517) 432-2221

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About the Authors:

Lourdes Gouveia is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. She was also a JSRI Postdoctoral Fellow during the 1996-97 academic year. Gouveia has been studying the global transformation of food and agriculture and its impact on workers and rural communities for the past 10 years. Since 1989 she has been studying the relationship between meatpacking restructuring and their employment of new Latino immigrants, focusing most closely on the arrival and settlement of Latinos in new meatpacking towns such as Lexington, Nebraska. She is currently working on a book manuscript based on her work in Lexington and is co-editing a second book on "Rural Latinos: Community and Regional Perspectives."

Donald D. Stull is Professor and Chair of Anthropology at the University of Kansas. From 1988 to 1990 he led a team of six social scientists from four universities in a study of ethnic relations in Garden City, Kansas, as part of a national project funded by the Ford Foundation. Many of their findings appeared in a special issue of Urban Anthropology, entitled "When the Packers Came to Town" (vol. 19, no. 4). During the early 1990's, Stull studied rural industrialization and rapid growth in Lexington, Nebraska. He continues to study the meat and poultry industries and offer technical assistance to their host communities.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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East Lansing, Michigan

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The Julian Samora Research Institute is committed to the generation, transmission, and application of knowledge to serve the needs of Latino communities in the Midwest. To this end, it has organized a number of publication initiatives to facilitate the timely dissemination of current research and information relevant to Latinos. The Julian Samora Research Institute Research Report Series (RR) publishes monograph length reports of original empirical research on Latinos in the nation conducted by the Institute's faculty affiliates and research associates, and/or projects funded by grants to the Institute.

Latino Immigrants, Meatpacking, and Rural Communities: A Case Study of Lexington, Nebraska

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Latino Immigrants, Meatpacking, and Rural Communities: A Case Study of Lexington, Nebraska

Introduction

During the 1980's, Nebraska, and other Great Plains states, experienced a severe farm and debt crisis. In the course of that decade slightly over 100,000 more people left the state than entered it. Non-metropolitan, especially rural, counties bore the brunt of out-migration as 40 out of 52 such counties experienced double digit rates of net out-migration. Out-migration was also highest among persons of key working age (25 to 44 years old) and numerous counties lost between 40 to 60% of their young over the course of the decade (Gouveia, forthcoming). Dawson County, Nebraska, located in the midst of cattle country, lost 11% of its population, largely due to the closing of Lexington's Sperry New Holland combine factory in 1986. Dawson county had a record number of farm bankruptcies and many of Lexington's downtown businesses closed.

Late in 1988, IBP, the world's largest meat processing firm, announced it would open a beefpacking plant in Lexington, on the site of the old Sperry New Holland plant. This announcement was part of the latest wave of meatpacking restructuring which moved plants away from urban centers and union strongholds and brought them to rural communities, closer to cattle and other agricultural inputs. This strategy has gone hand-in-hand with generous tax abatements and other subsidies from states and local communities where plants have relocated (Gouveia and Stull, 1994; Gouveia, 1994).

The population exodus, and an incipient recovery of Nebraska's economy toward the end of the 1980's, were responsible for seemingly enviable state and local unemployment figures hovering around 3%. Low unemployment meant that firms relocating to the area would inevitably confront labor shortages. To abate community fears about "the type of people" the company would bring in, IBP said it would secure a good portion of the labor force from the community and the construction crew already in town — while admitting it might have to seek labor from other areas as a last resort. It also contended in numerous public statements that its labor force would plateau at about 1,300 workers (Gouveia, forthcoming). The history of meatpacking and our most recent research experiences suggested otherwise. The recruitment of new labor, most likely Latino labor, would be at the center of IBP's employment strategies (Gouveia and Stull, 1994).

Today, IBP employs some 2,300 workers and the percentage of Latinos in the plant fluctuates between 70 and 80% of the total labor force, somewhat higher than the industry average. The percentage of Latinos in meatpacking increases steadily as different firms advance their own restructuring agendas. Resource-starved rural communities have become increasingly dependent on value-adding industries such as meatpacking. And both processing plants and their host communities have become increasingly dependent on Latino immigrants for their economic survival. By the early 1990's Nebraska's general population decline had abated somewhat, and 48 counties experienced net immigration between 1990 and 1995. A significant portion of this increase is attributed to the arrival of new immigrants in conjunction with the growth of meatpacking jobs. According to U.S. Census figures, the Nebraska Latino population experienced the largest increase of any population group in 1990-95, when it grew from 37,288 to 52,541 persons, or from 2.3 to 3.36% of the state's population. Community workers believe the increase was closer to 7%. It is also counties such as Dawson, showcasing a growing Latino population, that economic analysts have declared as the "winners" in Nebraska's economic revival (Gouveia, forthcoming).

In the spring of 1989, funded by the University of Nebraska-Omaha, Lourdes Gouveia selected Lexington, Nebraska, as a site to examine the changes expected to result from the opening of a large meatpacking plant and the arrival of Latinos. The selection was based on consultations with staff from the Center for Rural Affairs in Walthill, Nebraska, which had closely monitored the farm crisis of the 1980's. It was also based on consultations with Don Stull of the University of Kansas, who had conducted a similar study in Garden City, Kansas and had visited Lexington earlier in 1989. In the summer of the same year, Don Stull and Michael Broadway, from State University of New York-Geneseo, received funding from their respective universities to begin research in Lexington. Through a coordinated effort, we began collecting baseline socioeconomic and demographic data and interviewing key informants. At that time, the presence of new Latino migrants in town was barely perceptible. Thus, our initial efforts were directed at interviewing and collecting information from individuals representing the various agencies and community segments we expected to be most affected by the incoming changes. The Aspen Institute and the Ford Foundation funded the team to con-

duct additional work during 1992, and the University of Kansas funded Stan Moore, a bilingual doctoral student to conduct fieldwork during the same year. Lourdes Gouveia has received additional funding on a relatively continuous basis since her first entry into the community which has allowed her to follow Latinos and Latinas' migration and settlement trajectories since their initial arrival in Lexington.

Data

Before presenting our findings, a brief review of the data and their limitations is in order. The data come from several sources. We purposely sampled a cross-section of established Lexingtonians for ongoing conversations and interviews: cattle feeders; packing-plant managers and line workers; employers; social service providers; professionals; educators; and "everyday citizens." Of special interest to Gouveia are the experiences of new-immigrant Latinos and Latinas. She, along with Moore and local interviewers, conducted 66 structured interviews with Latino/a heads of household and informally interviewed another 100 Latino newcomers, most of whom were employed at IBP.

IBP is not required to release information on its workforce, and it chooses not to (Tom Doering, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, personal communication, 2/21/92). However, new employees fill out survey forms to determine employer tax credit (TJTC) eligibility.[1] IBP forwards these forms to the local office of Nebraska Job Services, and its staff kindly made them available to us. Review of all applications from the plant's opening in November 1990 through July 1992 enabled us to measure hiring and turnover rates since the plant's start-up. Names were used to deduce gender and ethnicity; the first three digits of the Social Security number provided an indicator of state of origin; and self-reported reliance on public assistance offered a rough measure of socioeconomic and dependency status. [We found reports of income and family size to be unreliable.] Conclusions drawn from these sources should be interpreted with caution, however, since surname offers only a rough indicator of ethnicity and Social Security number is imperfect in tracing point of origin.

Nebraska Job Services also allowed us to review application forms of persons seeking employment. Reviewing both active and inactive files, we collected data on everyone currently or previously employed by IBP, Cornland (an old-line beefpacking firm), and DCS, the firm that cleans the IBP plant each night (on the so-called C shift, from around midnight till 6:00 a.m.). There were so few DCS workers that we eliminated them from analysis.

These data offer a glimpse of who worked at IBP and Cornland in 1990-92, and why many of them left. Only those who relied on job placement services provided by the state appear in this sample, and it is unclear how representative they are of the general workforce.

The Dawson County office of the Nebraska Department of Social Services allowed us to collect information on three of their main programs: food stamps, aid to families with dependent children (AFDC), and general assistance (GA). General assistance provides emergency or "last resort" cash benefits to indigents. Eligibility varies by state and county. In Dawson County, it is restricted to U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents (LPR), and aliens entitled to remain in the United States for an indefinite period (for example, *Guatemaltecos* or *Salvadoreños* under temporary protective status [TPS] or other refugee programs). Undocumented persons are ineligible.

Normally, general assistance is not an accurate measure of indigence, because the number of people helped depends on available dollars. But according to the social services income supervisor, Dawson County "has never run out of money" (Gouveia fieldnotes 10/8/92). General assistance helps determine whether newcomers, drawn by the packing plants and related rural industrialization, represent a substantial drain on public resources.

Haven House, which opened in January 1991 to provide temporary food and shelter to newcomers seeking work in Lexington, was kind enough to allow us to review its intake forms. These forms identify sex, ethnicity, nationality, educational level, work history, and source of referral. While each guest is supposed to complete the intake form, some do not, and others provide insufficient, or incorrect, information.

The Nebraska Department of Social Services and its Lexington office also granted access to client data on food stamps, AFDC, and Medicaid during the study period. These data are supplemented by the use of annual reports and monthly data charts from these offices.

The Dawson County Register of Deeds allowed us to copy rosters of homes purchased during 1992-1994, which we then analyzed by surname. Finally, the Lexington schools were generous with enrollment data and occasional turnover analyses.

IBP Comes to Lexington

In April 1990 the U.S. Census counted 6,601 people in Lexington (Loughry, 1991a). It classified 7.3% of Lexington's population as minority; 4.9% of the population was reported to be Hispanic. Some eight months later, on November 8, 1990, IBP began slaughtering cattle in Lexington, Nebraska, in the first new beef plant to be built in the United States in a decade. The following week, it began processing carcasses into boxed beef. By February 1992, IBP reported that it employed 2,030 workers, and the number of job applicants averaged 100 per week (*Clipper-Herald,* 1992).

Recognizing the inopportune and costly timing of the 1990 Census, county officials requested a recount, which was conducted on February 24, 1993. This special census enumerated 8,544 persons in Lexington — an increase of 1,943, or 29.6% (U.S. Bureau of Census 1993). Hispanics, virtually all of them new immigrants, increased to 24% of the population (2,021 persons). Overall, Dawson County grew by 13%, making it and neighboring Gosper County, Nebraska's fastest growing counties in 1990 and 1991 (Ackerman, 1993).[2]

IBP New Hires

According to Targeted Job Tax Credit (TJTC) applications, in the initial 21 months of operation, IBP-Lexington hired 5,004 workers. By February 1992, the plant's labor force leveled off at slightly over 2,000 workers. With this figure as the denominator, we calculate that employee turnover during this period totaled 250%, or 12% per month! [This denominator yields a conservative turnover rate, since it took some 16 months for the number of workers to reach this level.] While a monthly turnover of 12% during IBP's initial months may shock those unfamiliar with the industry, this rate is actually low by industry standards. When IBP was getting its Finney County, Kansas, plant up-and-running in the early 1980's, turnover reached 60% per month. When Excel opened its Dodge City, Kansas, plant around the same time, their turnover averaged 30% per month (Stull fieldnotes, 6/17/88:9; 7/22/88:9; 5/6/89:23; 6/6/94:5). Despite a relatively low turnover rate by industry standards, in less than two years, IBP hired and terminated a labor force equal to 76% of the host community's 1990 population.

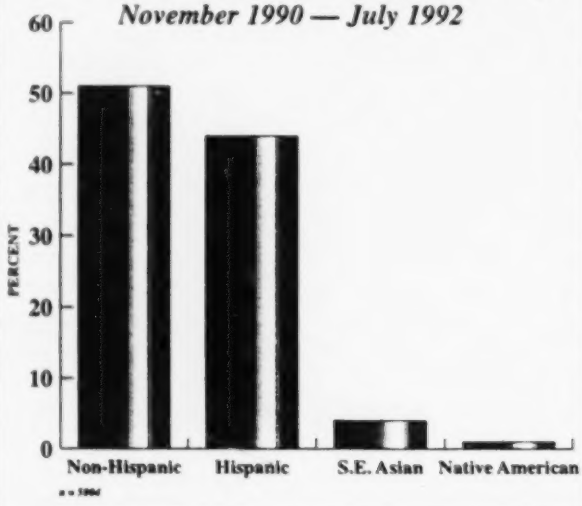
Using names to operationalize ethnicity, 51% were classified as non-Hispanic (most were presumed to be Anglo, since few African Americans or Native Americans were in evidence in Lexington during the study period); 44% were Hispanic; 4% Southeast Asian; and less than 1% Native American.[3] *(See Figure 1).*

Over time, a marked reversal in ethnic composition occurred: during start-up, 81% of those hired were non-Hispanic, but by the end of the study period, that figure had fallen to 37%. Conversely, the proportion of Hispanic new hires climbed steadily from 18% to 57%. Except for a sizable influx in the winter of 1992, the number of Southeast Asians remained small. *(See Figure 2).*

Data from TJTC applications suggest that the percentage of Latinos in IBP's Lexinton plant will continue to increase. This is the trend throughout the industry. In 1992, for example, Hispanics comprised 22% of the workers at IBP's Emporia plant, up from 8% in 1984. At IBP's Finney-County plant, they rose from 27% of the workforce to 63% during the same period (Stull, 1994a:114).

FIG. 1. IBP New Hires by Ethnicity

November 1990 — July 1992



Packers admit to targeting women for recruitment. As a top executive of another major packing firm told Broadway (1989:11), "We couldn't...begin to staff our plants if we didn't have women... I hope we can get them to stay longer because they probably aren't as mobile... [Our] average employee is a 24-year-old divorcee with two kids, and she needs the work." IBP officials initially projected that 60% of their processing workers (the majority of hourly employees) would be women, many of them single mothers or farm wives (Stull fieldnotes 6/28/90). IBP hoped on-site day care — a first for the industry — would draw and hold women, thus lowering turnover. But the day-care center has not been fully uti-

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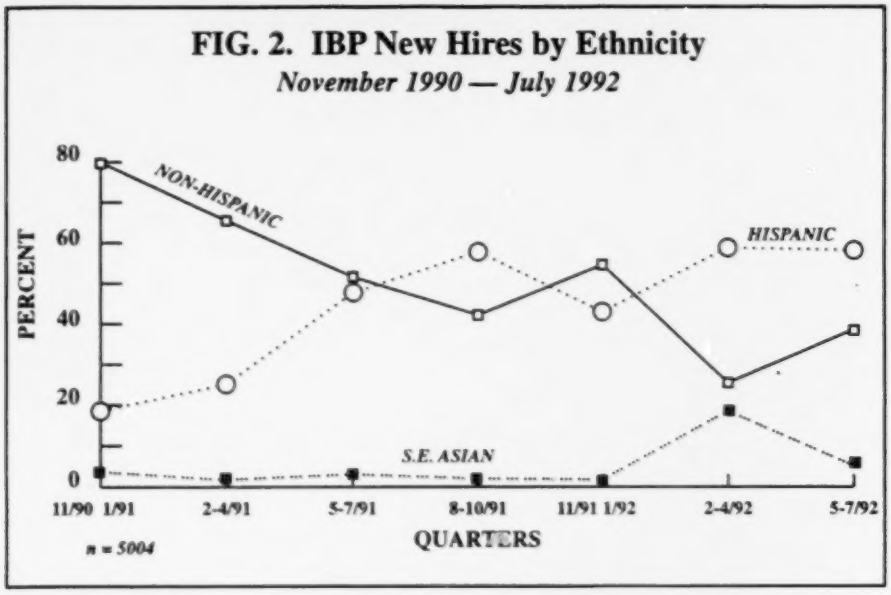
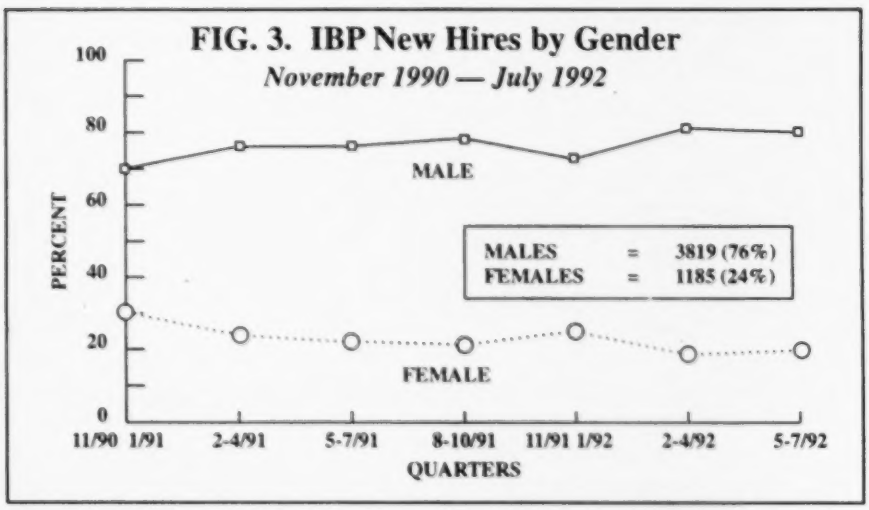


lized, largely because workers cannot afford the fee IBP deducts from their wages (initially $9/day for the first child, $8 for the second; IBP now charges more). Such fees are especially high when alternative forms of day care, based largely on ethnic or familial networks, are available to Latino workers. Although a number of the people we interviewed did not use any form of day care, the majority of those who did relied on friends or family. As a result of insufficient demand, IBP's day care has scaled back its hours of operation.

IBP's workforce remains overwhelmingly male — 76% over the study period. In fact, the proportion of female employees declined from 29% during the plant's initial three months to 20% at the end of the study period *(See Figure 3)*. The "Nebraska Community Profile" published on January 1, 1993, reported that women made up 35% of the plant's labor force. The figure seems to vacillate around 30%, but it is unlikely to go much higher (Nebraska Department of Economic Development, 1993).



Work in a meatpacking plant stands in stark contrast to farmwork or most other rural jobs. One local housewife, who started work at IBP in 1991 and quit five weeks later, expressed her apprehensions about the job this way:

> *At that time there were a lot of housewives, women like myself, in the beginning who thought: "Oh $7.15 an hour!..." I think they weeded us out pretty quick. I personally think that management wanted to get rid of the housewives as soon as possible because I don't think that we performed the job like other people had been doing. I mean, people that have worked in packing houses for two or three years, they've got to have something housewives don't have (Gouveia interview, 10/22/93).*

Company officials say they want to fill labor needs locally, but given plant size, the limited labor pool in and around Lexington, and high turnover, IBP rapidly runs through the local supply of willing workers. A combination of word of mouth (enhanced by bonuses offered to current employees for each new hire recruited), print and electronic advertisement in packing towns, and pockets of high unemployment continue to bring in a steady flow of applicants. Recruiters take to the road as needed, and if labor supply is down they may offer to cover some initial expenses against wages.

The majority of jobs in the meatpacking industry are unattractive to native-born workers. The literature on labor-market segmentation suggests that native workers — both men and women — have more options and are more likely to refuse such jobs because of their low wages and minimal benefits (Sassen, 1990). But once a migrant

stream is created, it changes labor-market patterns. The new-immigrant labor force becomes available to other economic sectors which initially had little to do with spurring new migration waves. In Lexington, new immigrants are now visible in jobs other than meatpacking.

The effects of such recruiting practices appear in Figures 4 and 5. Figure 4 suggests that those employed by IBP are increasingly and overwhelmingly newcomers to the state. Applicants on file with Nebraska Job Services in Lexington and communities within a 75-mile radius are a small and declining proportion of those hired by IBP. Those who have never applied for work with Nebraska Job Services ("Not on file") doubled over the course of the study. We assume, with caution, that such persons are from out-of-state.

We used the first three digits of Social Security numbers to get an idea of where workers come from. Figure 5 complements trends seen elsewhere. At the time of the plant's start-up, over 60% of the new hires had obtained their Social Security card in Nebraska; by summer 1992 that figure dropped to 28%. We expected many of the new hires from out-of-state would be from Kansas, given its proximity and beefpacking tradition, but workers from Kansas constituted less than 5%. The states with the largest representation were California and Texas, and over time their combined numbers accounted for one-quarter of those hired. IBP actively recruits in these states, and there is no doubt that many of these workers originally came from Mexico.

FIG. 4. Previous Location of Job-Service Applicants

November 1990 — July 1992

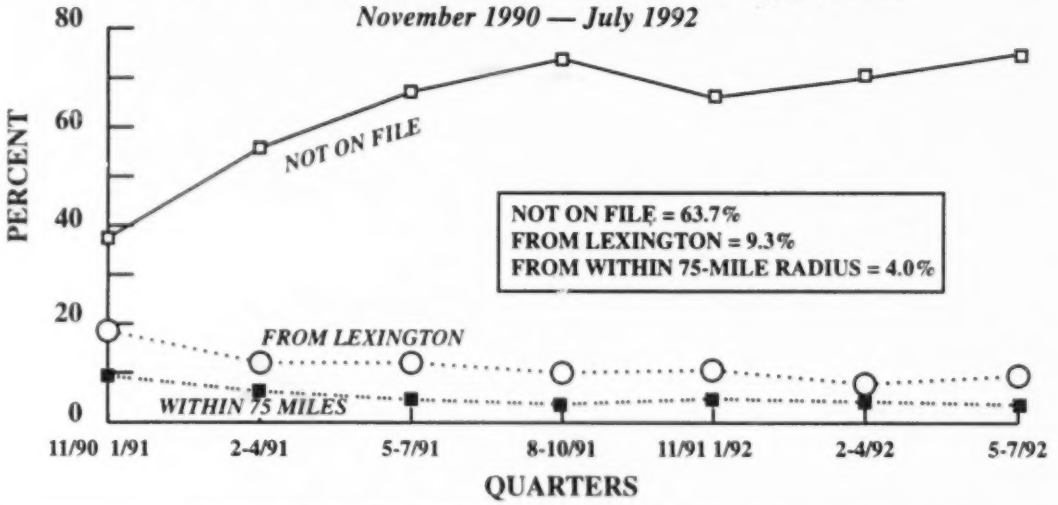


FIG. 5. State of Origin by Social Security Number

November 1990 — July 1992

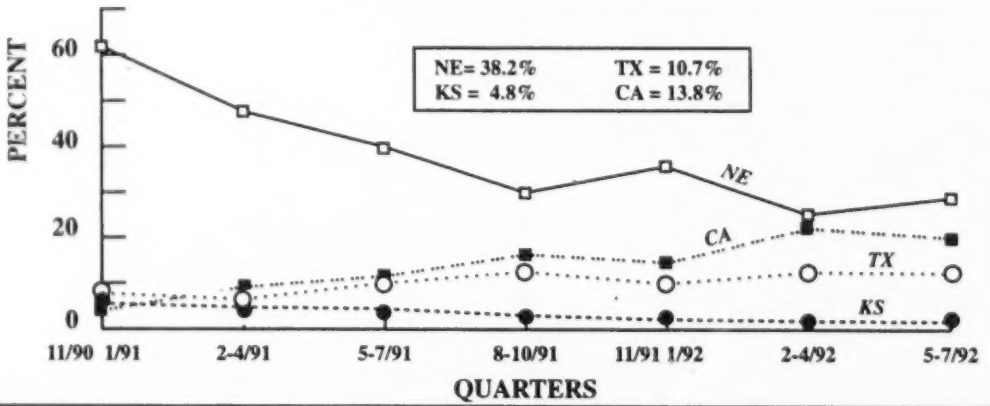


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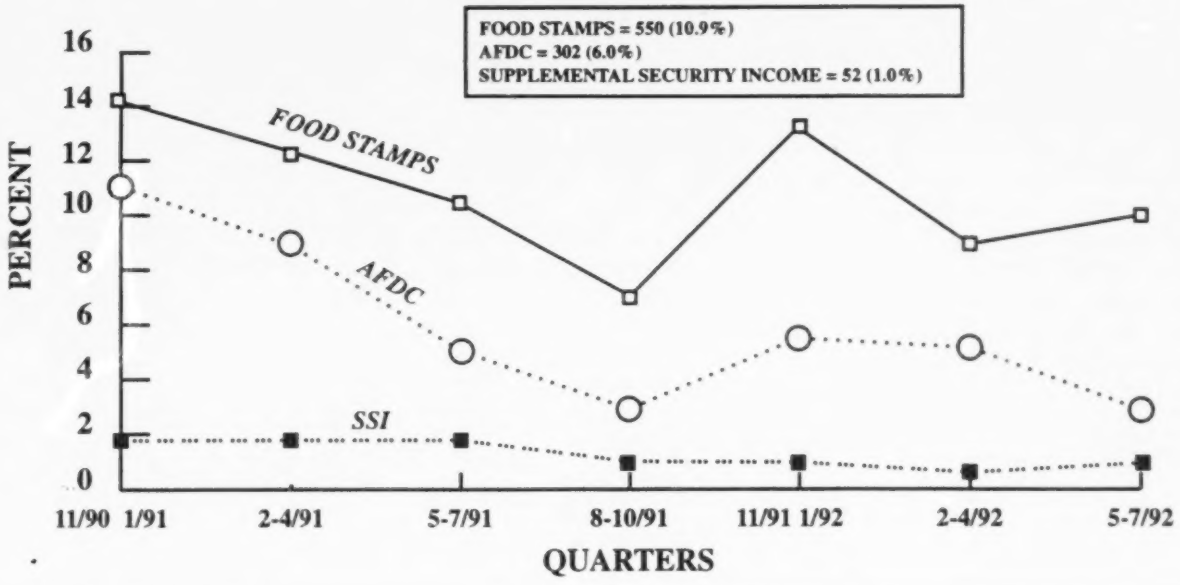
FIG. 6. IBP New Hires Who Received State Aid in Previous 30 Days

November 1990 — July 1992



Meatpacking attracts the poor and the disadvantaged with its so-called good wages and absence of prerequisite job skills. But only 18% of new hires reported having received some form of public assistance — food stamps, aid to families with dependent children (AFDC), supplemental security income (SSI) — during the month prior to being hired by IBP. In fact, the proportion of new hires receiving such aid actually declined over time. We can only speculate on this trend, but it may relate to increasing numbers of immigrant Latino workers who are either ineligible for or uninformed of such services. This observation is supported by Department of Social Service data discussed later in this report.[4] *(See Figure 6).*

Haven House

Finding affordable housing is the greatest concern for newcomers to any community. The challenges of finding housing in a new community are compounded for those with limited resources in rapidly growing communities, where housing is in short supply. Haven House was established by the people of Lexington to assist newcomers who have limited resources. It provides new arrivals with a bed or cot and two warm meals a day. The shelter is funded by the United Way, the Homeless Shelter Association Trust Fund, area churches and civic organizations, and private donations. The press reports a growing respect for the dedicated work of community members and staff associated with the shelter (Hasty 1996).

Many newcomers, particularly Hispanic men, spend their first nights in Lexington at Haven House. After securing permanent housing, they may send for their wives and families. Between its opening in January 1991 and July 1992, a total of 834 adults and 93 children stayed at least one night. Eighty-four percent of these guests were males; 47% of those who completed the intake form said they were single or divorced. Guests were in their late 20's or early 30's, with an average educational level of 8.5 years. Of those indicating past work experience, 23% listed meatpacking, 22% construction, and 20% farm or field work.

The number of guests increased steadily over the study period: from an average of 37 adults per month in the winter of 1991 to 58 adults per month by summer 1992. As the number of guests has increased, average length of stay has decreased: from 8.9 days initially to 5.7 days in the final six months of our review. This reflects increased demand, but it also coincides with policy changes implemented by a new director.

Sixty-four percent of those who stayed at Haven House were identified as Hispanic; 31% as Anglo; 4% Asian. This ethnic composition reflects that of the workforce in the beef plants, and for this reason Haven House's advisory board has chosen Spanish-speaking Latinas as its directors.

When asked where they were from, guests listed 45 of the 50 states and 9 foreign countries. Nebraska and California led the list at 15%, followed by 12% each from Texas and Colorado, and 8% from Kansas. Twenty percent said they were from Mexico (16 states were represented), followed by Guatemala (1%) and El Salvador.

When people in Lexington first began discussing the need for a shelter such as Haven House, many voiced concern that it might become a way station for transients. Their fears appear to be unfounded. Over half (51%) of the guests said they were in town looking for work, and 36% of those specifically identified IBP; 16% were actually referred to Haven House by IBP. Only 8% said they were just passing through.

General Assistance (GA)

Data on general-assistance benefits were provided by the Lexington office of the Nebraska Department of Social Services. From July 1989, when IBP was under construction, to June 1992, when the plant was in full production, the number of GA applicants tripled, from only 41 during the last six months of 1989 to 135 in the first half of 1992. Males were more likely to apply than females throughout the study period (a ratio of males to females of 1.69:1). The percentage of applicants awarded benefits fell dramatically from 70% during the last half of 1989 to only around 40% in the first half of 1992. The ratio of non-Anglo to Anglo applicants increased, but non-Anglos were less likely to actually receive benefits. At the beginning of the study period, about half of the applicants from each group were awarded benefits, but by mid-1992 less than 15% of non-Anglos compared to 38% of the Anglos received benefits.

Despite a sharp decline in successful applications, GA benefits and administrative costs steadily increased. Benefits per quarter rose from just below $8,000 during the first half of the study period to over $10,000 by its end. Not surprisingly, administrative costs, figured by the amount of time spent with a client regardless of whether benefits were granted, increased as well. But the amount of time spent with each client was cut in half, from an average of 60 minutes to 26 minutes, clearly documenting the increased workload on social service workers.

Reasons people gave for requesting general assistance also changed. Early in the study period, only one-fifth (22%) of the applicants sought assistance with temporary lodging, motel expenses, gas and oil, or bus tickets, suggesting they were either looking for work or traveling through town. By late in the study period, more than half (52%) gave such reasons. Conversely, those who cited medical reasons, or said they needed living expenses (rent, utilities, food) — suggesting an established life in Lexington — have declined.

Since 1993, there has been a progressive and marked decline of general assistance requests compared to requests for other services, especially Medicaid (Lexington Social Services graphs, various years). This may mean that our study period ended at the very peak of IBP's recruitment, and the associated immigration to Lexington. By 1994, school, social services, and Haven House figures, as well as IBP's reported turnover rate, suggested some "leveling off" of the population. This phenomenon often occurs after the first three or four years of a plant's opening, when turnover rates begin to slow down. But meatpacking communities are perennially in a state of flux from endemic turnover typical of the industry (Stull *et al.*, 1990).

Other Department of Social Service Data

Data from 447 applications for social services in Dawson County between July 1989 and July 1992 show that more requests for services (43%) occurred during the five months prior to IBP's opening than during the last 12 months of the study period (36%). Requests for medical assistance almost doubled between the first and the last 12 months of the study period, while the reverse was true for food stamps. While these requests for assistance doubled, so did the rates of refusal to provide services. During the study, "Not applicable" (presumably on the basis of income) was the most frequent reason given by staff for refusing to award benefits.

Reflecting national trends, most applicants, (71%) were between the ages of 18 and 44, and 58% of all applicants were between the ages of 25 and 44. Most were women (73.3%). Almost half the applicants for social services were unemployed (48.3%). Those who were employed held jobs in the service sector in restaurants and sales (20.4%), or in meatpacking (13.4%). Among unemployed applicants, the largest percentage (28.6) cited IBP as their previous employer. Contrary to popular views about immigrants' excessive use of social welfare services, this sample showed that more than 92% of all applicants were American citizens. Only 13.5% were Latinos (primarily Mexican), while 84% were Anglo.

Annual reports from the Department of Social Services show that for all of Dawson County, AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children), food stamps, and Medicaid cases increased gradually from 1988 to 1991. Medicaid expenses increased an unprecedented 30% the following year. However, social service administrators attribute much of this increase to changes in the Medicaid eligibility requirements in 1990.

There is no question that the number of people eligible for Medicaid has increased since IBP opened, and that this is not simply due to changes in Medicaid requirements in 1990. For example, Lexington experienced a 230% increase in Medicaid expenses for children between January 1992 and January 1994. In contrast, nearby North Platte's increase during the same period was about 68%. The number of intakes for AFDC and Children's Medical for Lexington have increased by about 300% between 1992 and 1995 (Nebraska Department of Social Services, several years). One possible reason for this increase has to do with the "natural" process of recomposition of a new labor supply and immigrant network. New immigrants often arrive in Lexington with little more than the clothes on their back and the hope of a job at IBP. This fact, combined with high labor turnover, produces a constant stream of persons potentially eligible for social assistance.

Despite a noticeable jump in the number of families served by AFDC or food stamps in the Lexington office, increases have remained below those found among Nebraska's general population in recent years. It should be noted that the majority of Medicaid expenditures are not necessarily associated with the influx of a new labor force. Instead, programs for the aged, blind, and disabled constitute the majority of social welfare expenditures for Dawson County, as for the nation as a whole (Nebraska Department of Social Services, various years). Furthermore, the proportion of moneys allocated to such programs has increased dramatically in the last three years, reaching 65% or more of total Medicaid expenditures. Many new-immigrant workers are not eligible for social services and, as our household survey below suggests, many who are eligible do not apply.

Schools: Enrollment and Turnover

Enrollment in the Lexington public schools has reached record levels since IBP opened. Enrollment rose from 1558 students in May 1990 to more than 2,238 students by the end of the 1995 school year —a 44% increase. Minority enrollment rose sharply as well. Just before IBP's opening, 3.5% of the student body was classified as minority; by September of 1992 the figure had jumped to 23%; it reached 36% by early 1994. (Loughry, 1991a; Gouveia: personal communication with school registrar, February 25, 1994).

The increase in enrollment is only part of the story. Meatpacking imports most of its labor, which explains the sharp increases in the size of the student body. The industry is also known for high turnover in its workforce. School turnover parallels that of the IBP plant. In the fall of 1991 turnover in the Lexington public schools was approximately 7.75%. By the end of the 1991-92 school year the rate had more than tripled, reaching 25% (Gouveia and Stull, 1995:96-97). By early 1995, school turnover was reported to be 44%, but believed to be declining (*Clipper-Herald*, 1995). Only time will tell whether turnover is indeed on the decline.

Job Service Employment Applicants

Of all employment applications on file with the Lexington office of Nebraska Job Services in the summer of 1992, 323 stated they had worked or were currently working at IBP. Of these, 61% were male; 65% were Anglo and 32% Hispanic. Applicants averaged 28 years of age, ranging from 18 to 57. They averaged 11 years of schooling. Non-Anglos, primarily Hispanics, were older (29.7 years), with less formal education (8.9 years). Family size was smaller for Anglos (2.9 members) than non-Anglos (3.9 members).

Of those listing work history, 24% indicated experience in meatpacking (the most frequently mentioned category); 16% said they had worked construction, followed by food services and farmwork. Anglos and Hispanics differed notably in variety of past employment: while only 10 different job categories were listed by Hispanics, Anglos listed 27.

Those who had worked at IBP after it opened in November 1990 averaged 8.5 months on the job, with a mode of 6 months and a range of 1 to 30 months. There was no notable ethnic difference in average length of employment. Forty percent were fired or quit because of "problems" or "disagreements" with their supervisor. Thirteen percent cited the physical demands of the job itself: it made them physically ill; they could not take the cold; their hands, arms, elbows, shoulders, or backs hurt or needed medical attention; they had an accident or injury that forced them to leave. Such factors undoubtedly influenced another 25% to quit because they "did not like the job," "needed a change," or "wanted a better job." Thus, more than two-thirds (68%) of this sample left IBP because of working conditions. The remainder

cited "personal reasons," such as leaving town (6%), pregnancy, or problems with day care, housing, or transportation. In some cases, such "personal reasons" were also probably work-related.

In its own records, IBP distinguishes only between "voluntary" and "involuntary" termination. According to the employee roster provided to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, of the 1,200 workers who left IBP-Lexington's employment from Nov. 8, 1990 (the day the plant opened) until Aug. 8, 1991, only 12% (147) were fired (involuntary termination). However, other research suggests higher levels of "involuntary termination," (Stull, 1994b).

Comparing those who had worked at IBP with those who sought work after Cornland (which had been in Lexington for over 30 years) closed its doors in the spring of 1991, shows the marked difference between the workforces of old- and new-line packers. Cornland workers were older (average age of 31.5), better educated (11.5 years), and had greater job stability (averaging 33 months on the job). Interestingly, their work histories paralleled those of IBP employees: one-third previously worked in meatpacking, one-fifth in construction, followed by food services (8%) and farmwork (5%).

New-Arrival Latinos

To better understand the backgrounds and needs of Latinos and Latinas who have moved to Lexington since 1990, Gouveia, Moore, and their assistants interviewed 66 heads of household. Because a reliable census of new-immigrant Latinos does not exist, a random sample was not feasible. Purposive and snowball sampling procedures were employed instead (Bernard, 1994:95-97). Interviewers contacted respondents at various locations in town (Haven House, social gatherings), and each respondent was asked to identify others who might be willing to participate in the study. Interviews were conducted in the home with those individuals who defined themselves as household heads. Respondents were asked about household composition, work history and experience, working conditions, use of social services, migration history, and relations with established residents. Ten interviews were conducted in English, 56 in Spanish.

Household Composition

Household heads ranged in age from 19 to 48; half were 28 or younger. Four-fifths (80%) were men. Most were born in Mexico (62%), but almost one-fourth (24%) were born in Guatemala. Only 11% were born in the United States. Of those born elsewhere, nearly 32% have lived in the United States for 10 years or more, but 41% had lived in this country less than five years. More than half (57%) the sample household heads had moved to Lexington within the past year; less than one-tenth (9%) had lived in town more than two years.

Only 13% of the household heads were U.S. citizens: 62% were citizens of Mexico and 23% were Guatemalans. Two respondents were citizens of El Salvador. While nine out of ten respondents were not U.S. citizens, more than one-third (37%) were in the United States legally through provisos of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), most under its Special Agricultural Workers, or SAW, proviso. Eighteen percent had been granted refugee status, while 20% had not adjusted their legal status.

The tenure patterns of the immigrants in this sample are similar to those found nationwide. A relatively large proportion, especially those who own land in their home country (22%), may be sojourners — persons working temporarily in the United States who will someday return to their home countries. But there is evidence to suggest the presence of many who may settle permanently in the U.S. — and maybe Lexington. Less than a third visit their original homes once a year or more. Forty-five percent of the household heads had not returned to their country of birth in the last two years; 26% had not gone back in the last five. However, one must also factor into these figures the fact that refugees, undocumented workers, or those whose legalization status is pending, are less likely to make frequent return visits than those who are fully documented.

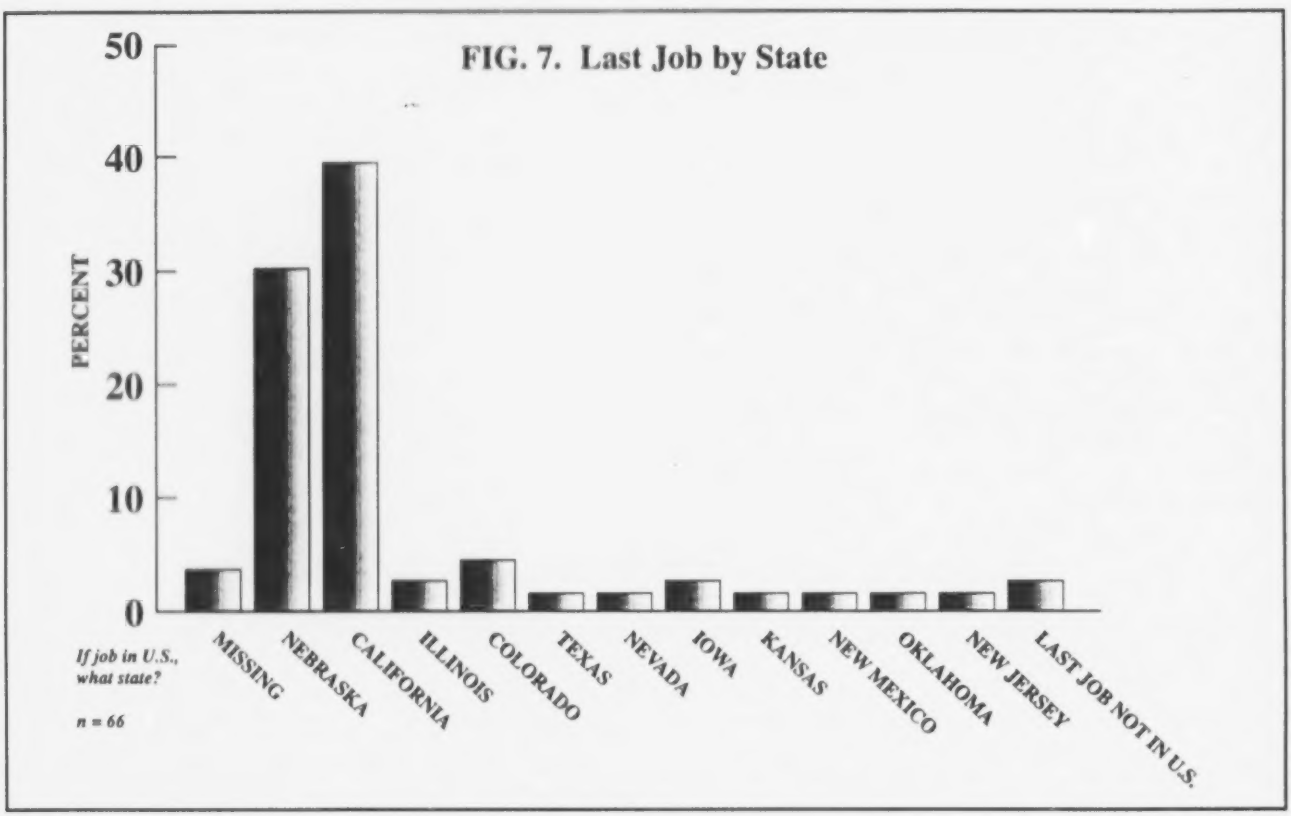
Education and English-Language Skills

The educational background of the household heads in this sample reflects their country of origin and citizenship — only 11% were educated in the United States, while 63% went to school in Mexico and 22% somewhere in Central America. Two-thirds had less than a high school education. At the other end of the educational spectrum: 7% held a high school diploma; 12% had attended some college; and 11% held an associate's or bachelor's degree. Their educational background suggests that most of the sample immigrated to the United States as adults.

Country of origin, limited education, and recent arrival in the United States contribute to the lack of English-language skills. Seventy percent of the respondents said they speak little or no English. Only 2 of the 66 household heads interviewed said they spoke English well; however, 10 of the 56 respondents chose to be interviewed in English. [As these data suggest, self-reported language skill should always be viewed with caution.] Nine out of ten said they usually speak Spanish at home, and 7 of 10 reported usually speaking Spanish at work. Eighty-one percent said their supervisor did not speak Spanish, and most (56%) reported that the language barrier was a problem. Despite limited knowledge of English and the problems its causes, less than half (42%) have attended ESL classes. An even smaller number (26%) have attended on a regular basis. This has proven to be the case in other meatpacking towns as well (Stull *et al.*, 1990). Job exhaustion, conflicting work schedules, family responsibilities, lack of transportation, and the difficulty of learning a new language discourage many from attending ESL classes.

Work History

Eighty-three percent of the household heads in the sample said they had no problem finding work in Lexington, but limited education and English skills restricted job opportunities for them and members of their households. Of the household heads we interviewed, 83% worked in meatpacking. Of the 54 household heads working in this industry, 51 worked for IBP. Less than 2% worked in agriculture, while 17% worked in the service or construction sectors. Only 2 out of 66 (3%) were unemployed. The vast majority (81%) heard about their present job from friends or relatives, a pattern which has been noted among meatpacking workers elsewhere (Grey, 1995).



One of the questions that has troubled those seeking to understand the meatpacking industry is whether workers travel a "circuit" from plant to plant and community to community. The job histories of these respondents suggest that many do. Almost one-fourth (24%) of those interviewed said their last job was in meatpacking, while a similar number (26%) had worked in food-related sales and services. More than a fourth (27%) had been farm-

workers before taking their present job. All-in-all, almost four of five (77%) household heads in this sample had worked in the food industry in their last job. The only other areas mentioned were construction, manufacturing, and home services. However, the data also reveal the relatively recent formation of meatpacking as an immigrant labor market. Only 6% of respondents worked in meatpacking in a job previous to their last one. On the other hand, 31% had worked in agriculture and 17% had worked in food-related sectors.

Like the TJTC applicants discussed earlier *(see Figure 5)*, most household heads in this sample are newcomers to Lexington, and to Nebraska as well *(see Figure 7)*. Forty-two percent went to work at their present job within the last year. The most frequent reasons given for leaving their previous job were: 1) it did not pay enough (29%); 2) they heard about a better job (16%), presumably the one they now have in Lexington; and 3) their previous job was seasonal (15.5%). Only 5% admitted being fired.

Prior to taking their present job in Lexington, only 31% of the respondents had worked in the state. In sharp contrast, 41% had worked in California. Colorado was the only other location of significance — 8%. If we go back two previous jobs, California is still cited most frequently (29%), with Nebraska a distant second (11%). This is not surprising. Latinos have increasingly found work in midwestern meatpacking plants an attractive alternative to construction or farmwork in California or Texas.

Nine percent of the sample admitted that two jobs ago they were working in Mexico or Guatemala. However, 25% of the sample did not respond to this question, which suggests that these individuals may have been residing outside the United States, and did not wish to divulge where. On the other hand, non-response may merely reflect fading memory.

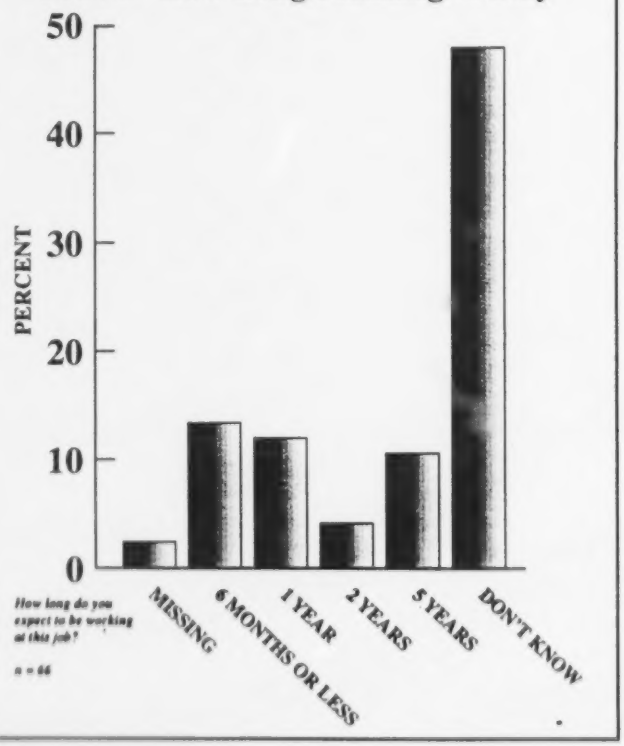
The Current Population Survey for January 1991 found meat-products industries to have the lowest median employer and occupational tenure of all occupations surveyed (Maguire, 1993:33). This should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with meatpacking, where a turnover of 3% a month is the goal most packing plants strive for, but seldom attain. Forty percent of the respondents had changed jobs at least twice over the past two years.

The tenuous nature of work in this industry is confirmed by the sample's responses when asked how long they expected to work in their present job *(see Figure 8)*. Thirty percent thought they would remain one year or less, while only 11% expected to be there in five years. Half of those who answered this question said they did not know how long they would be in their present job. We probed further among those who answered that they did not know, and their responses further confirmed the workers' reluctance to make long-term commitments to a job that was both physically demanding and dangerous. "We leave work very tired," said a 26 year-old Guatemalan man who had worked at IBP for two months. The situation of many new-immigrants is exemplified by "Marta" and her 23 year-old husband, who has been at IBP for one year: "We like this town and as long as he can physically hold out, we plan to be here." On the job, the most serious problem facing Marta's husband, and those like him, is the rapid pace of their work and the related issue of "short-crewing" (work crews staffed with fewer workers than needed to adequately perform at established line speeds).

Use of Social Services

Established residents of Lexington and other towns that host packing plants are often concerned that newcomers will depend too heavily on social services paid for with their taxes. Data from TJTC applications presented above indicated that less than one-fifth received public assistance during the month before they applied for work at IBP. Lex-

FIG. 8. How Long Planning to Stay



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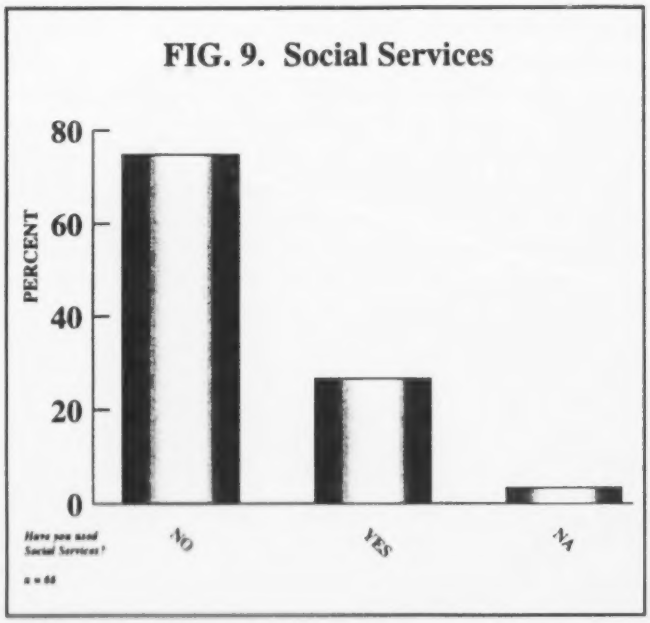


ington's major social service expenses are associated not with newcomers, but with payments to the elderly. In fact, almost three-fourths (73%) of sample households had not used any of the programs offered by the local office of the Nebraska Department of Social Services *(see Figure 9)*. This finding is supported by studies of Latinos elsewhere in the Midwest (Healy, 1995:A7), which have found that while they "often work in short-term, low-paying jobs... they infrequently apply for the welfare benefits for which they are eligible." Several factors may account for low Latino utilization of the welfare system: lack of awareness of their rights; a value system that rejects taking benefits that have not been earned through labor; poor English skills; ineligibility if they are not citizens; and fear of attracting attention to relatives who may be illegal aliens. For those who did access the social service system, reported use was spread throughout the full range of such services, but the most frequently mentioned were immunizations (15%) and Medicaid and food stamps (12% each).

Sample households were apparently more willing to seek assistance from personal contacts and nongovernmental agencies than from state agencies. Haven House was used by more sample households than any other nongovernmental service organization in Lexington — 38%. Next came the Hispanic Center (26%), followed by Love in Action (21%), churches (13% — 8% mentioned the Catholic Church), and the food pantry (11%). But when asked which groups had been most helpful since their arrival in Lexington, friends and relatives were listed most often (23%), followed closely by Haven House (22%).

We must be cautious in interpreting the low usage levels found in this sample, however. The majority of those who had not applied for social services (47%) said they had not needed them and another 7% said they were ineligible because of lack of documentation. However, 16% said they didn't know much about it or whether they were eligible. As newcomers become more familiar with available services, demand can be expected to increase. It may also be that these particular respondents had not been in town long enough to need such services, but with time their demand may rise.

But the need for services can change. For example, 61% of the households had no health insurance, and 13% had insurance for the head of the household only. One-fourth of the respondents said they did not have insurance because they were not eligible, while 17% said they could not afford the premiums. Only 8% said they didn't see the need for insurance.

Less than one-fourth of the sample households had health insurance for all their members; yet, one-third have used the hospital since coming to Lexington, slightly less than half (44%) have used the Plum Creek Clinic, and 86% said they had seen a physician in town. Low levels of Medicaid use in this group, combined with high reliance on medical facilities, suggest that these households pay for most of their medical expenses out of pocket. Such expenses can severely strain already overburdened household budgets, which may in turn lead these families to depend more heavily on community resources in the future (see Grey, 1995).

Housing

Like other communities experiencing rapid growth, the availability and quality of housing have been of concern to many. Forty percent of those interviewed said they had problems finding adequate housing; 54% said they had difficulty finding reasonably priced housing.

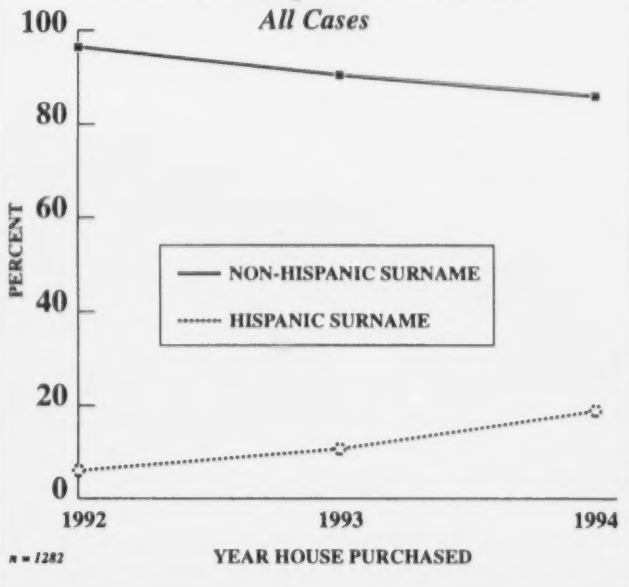
Lexington has taken a prudent approach to new housing, emphasizing slow growth, rehabilitation of existing rental units, and scattered-site development (Loughry, 1991b). While the long-term goal is to provide affordable permanent housing for newcomers, many must live initially in mobile homes and rental units. Lexington's slow progress in constructing new housing seemed to have also been affected by unrealistic projections of housing needs. According to housing consultants hired by the city, housing needs were based largely on IBP's initial public projections of 1,400 workers and the company's contention that many of these workers would be local. By

1992, these consultants admitted that the number of houses needed was twice the 334 units called for earlier (Gouveia fieldnotes, 7/92).

When we asked Latino respondents in the sample what kind of housing they occupied, more than one-third (34%) said they lived in mobile homes, while slightly fewer lived in houses (32%), and a fourth lived in apartments (26%). Around 7% lived in either Haven House or rooming houses. Only 9% of those responding said they owned their home; 89% rented. Monthly housing payments ranged from $50 to $500, with a median payment of $251-300. The amount sample households spend on housing follows a bimodal curve: 22% pay $351-400 a month, while 20% pay $251-300. One-third of the households spend between $200 and $300 per month on housing.

Register of deeds roster of homes purchased in Dawson County from 1992 through May of 1994 reveal that the percentage of homes bought by individuals with Hispanic surnames increased from less than 5% to about 16%. In absolute numbers, this translated into 23 out of 500 houses in 1992, 50 out of 518 in 1993, and 29 out of 191 during the first five months of 1994. *(See Figure 10).*

FIG. 10. Buyers with Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Surnames



Conclusions and Recommendations

There is no one true method of assessing the costs and benefits of IBP's arrival to Lexington, or of the contribution of its new, largely immigrant, labor force. In the final analysis, any evaluation depends on how you keep score and where you stand. Elsewhere we have summarized and evaluated the changes we have witnessed in Lexington and other packinghouse towns. Copies of these publications have been provided to the public library in Lexington. [See, for example, Broadway 1991; Broadway, Stull, and Podraza, 1994; Gouveia and Rousseau, 1995; Gouveia, 1994; Gouveia, forthcoming; Gouveia and Stull, 1995; Stull 1994a, 1994c; Stull, Broadway, and Griffith, 1995.]

From our perspective, the costs include overcrowding and increased turnover in the schools; rising crime; shortages in adequate housing; declines in community health; increased demand for health care and other social services and, importantly, the emergence or reemergence of racism and isolated instances of discrimination. Accompanying any population growth is the need to expand and upgrade community infrastructure; however, associated costs escalate when tax abatements and holidays are provided to the very employers whose arrival necessitates such expansions. IBP's arrival sounded the death knell of Cornland, a longtime employer, which found itself unable to compete with an industrial giant like IBP. Area farmers have a ready market for their feed grain as area cattle feeders expand to meet IBP's growing demand for fat cattle. Yet numerous analysts are expressing serious concerns about increasing meatpacking concentration and its potentially negative impact on smaller producers.

Lexington's recent growth has stemmed from an influx of new-immigrant laborers and their families, most from Mexico and Central America. Educators, law enforcement officials, social service providers, as well as everyday citizens, have been challenged by the linguistic and cultural differences of these newcomers. Lexington today is a much more diverse community than it was before IBP opened its plant. We believe this is an important benefit of IBP's arrival. A growing assortment of ethnic shops and restaurants such as La Bamba, Teresa's Tortillas, The Oriental Store, and Taqueria Mexico have appeared alongside established merchants, making downtown Lexington far more lively and economically sound than it was in the late 1980's. These businesses and the clients they attract have expanded the tax base and thanks, in large part, to Latino newcomers, Lexington reports record sales and sales tax increases.

Lexington has also benefited from a strengthening of what social scientists like to call "civil society": community organizations that stand somewhere between government and the private sector. Voluntary organizations such as the Volunteer Network, Hispanic Center, Love in Action, the Interagency Alliance, and the Community Services Board (which oversees Haven House) are only some of the nongovernmental organizations that were founded or expanded with IBP's arrival. But this expansion of volunteer organizations has a darker side, too. The growing number of poor people in the area has made them necessary. Love in Action, for example, continues to report upwards of 500 families for whom it provides household items and food.

The value of economic development strategies is not calculated from the numbers contained in sales taxes or crime rates alone. Such figures are necessary in evaluating change, but they are not sufficient. The citizens of Lexington, oldtimers and newcomers alike, must decide what kind of community they want. Agreement on such an important issue is not easily achieved in a community undergoing such profound and rapid changes.

Based on what we have learned from this study and from the broader literature on immigration and community change, we wish to make some recommendations in three of the many areas that need special attention by community residents and leaders in these "new" meatpacking communities.

1. Create a "Positive Context of Reception" for New Immigrants.

Lexington's future depends on successfully incorporating newcomers — especially immigrants — into the community. Students of immigration have noted that a "positive context of reception" depends on a combination of factors: favorable immigration and other public policies; as well as positive attitudes on the part of members of the host community, including established residents who share the ethnic background of the newcomers; and the support of employers (Portes and Borocz, 1989). The people of Lexington have worked hard to welcome and make a place for those who have come seeking work and home in their community. Even before IBP opened its doors in November 1990, community members organized forums, cultural diversity workshops, and volunteer groups to prepare for the new arrivals. Many in the community remain committed to facing the challenges of rapid growth and increasing linguistic and cultural diversity.

These efforts have paid off in several ways. Interethnic tensions and racism are in evidence, but potentially serious expressions of each have been kept in check. Lexington's Mexican-American community, established in the 1920's, organized the community's first Hispanic Center. Although it is now closed, the center welcomed many immigrants to town and provided them with basic necessities and valuable information. Local merchants, churches, social service agencies, the newspaper, and the schools have tried hard to meet the needs of their new clientele and thereby make their adjustment to a new community a bit easier. The overwhelming majority of newcomers we have interviewed say they are happy in Lexington. "It is a nice and tranquil community" or "it's a very good place for our children" are typical comments made by Latino/a newcomers.

Notwithstanding these valiant efforts, communities like Lexington must continue to open political, economic, and civil society spaces for the active participation of Latinos as protagonists, not simply recipients, in the articulation of strategies and policies concerning their overall quality of life. To date, no Latino has been elected to a government office in Lexington, although one Latina did run unsuccessfully for County Commissioner. On the other hand, the increased presence of Latinos, in some instances, has spurred the passage of new local ordinances aimed at curtailing practices such as "pig roasts" or ample use of public spaces. While oldtimers may find these practices annoying, they often constitute important cultural rituals which go to the core of one of the main resources Latinos bring with them: their appreciation for family and community. More serious are the "English Only" ordinances and state laws aimed primarily at an increasingly visible Latino population that are popping up around the country. The public and policymakers need to guard against fallacious claims and the creation of fear and hate which allow such movements to thrive. But rural Latinos must be an integral part of efforts to defeat them. In some cases, one or two English-speaking "co-ethnics" emerge as "brokers" between the newcomers and the oldtimers, between the Latinos and the Anglo population. This is also problematic as, overtime, a type of symbiotic relationship tends to develop whereby the Anglo community, the press, and policymakers find it easier to deal with one individual who may or may not represent the heterogeneous needs and aspirations of the Latino population. Conversely, such individuals find their newfound status increasing, and thus hard to relinquish, with every call they must answer for the Latino community. Leadership training and capacity-building initiatives directed at the new Latino population must be cognizant of these issues and invest more effort in diversifying the Latino leadership and its grassroots base.

Positive community attitudes are not all that is needed to secure the stability and well-being of the new-immigrant labor force. Two other factors are also important. One is the nation's public policies on immigration and welfare and the rhetoric surrounding these policies. Today, as in previous periods of significant immigration, many believe the U.S. is being "overrun" by "aliens," a misperception reinforced by public statements that we have "lost control of our borders." Anti-immigrant sentiments are historically associated with times of economic insecurity, high unemployment, and low wages. Irish, German, Italian, Polish, Asian, and Latino immigrants have all at one time or another been blamed for whatever social and economic ills besiege society at the moment (see Portes and Rumbaut, 1996). Similarly, the newly reenacted welfare law reflects a new nativism which threatens to undermine, rather than improve, ethnic relations in this country. It ignores the abundant and under-utilized social resources and skills immigrants bring with them (see Gouveia, 1997).

Racism and xenophobia have often shaped immigration policy and the reception given immigrants in the United States. Hostility toward refugees and immigrant workers has been a problem in other countries as well. As a result, public pressure to restrict immigrant rights is increasing, and public willingness to welcome and assist them is waning. The public library, the schools, and other civic organizations in Lexington should make a point of collecting and disseminating sound research findings and encouraging balanced discussion about the facts of immigration and how it is affecting the community (*See, for example,* the recently edited collection by Rochín, 1996; Rochín 1995, Aponte *et al.*, 1994, and other publications by the Julian Samora Research Institute which specializes in Midwest Latinos/as). Only in this way, can the people of Lexington judge for themselves the social and economic consequences of events in their community, state, and nation.

The attitude of employers toward their workers is perhaps the most important element in the context of reception. Our research, and that of many others, has demonstrated that the meatpacking industry tolerates, if not encourages, instability among a large portion of its labor force and, hence, the communities that host its plants. This instability arises from several factors. One is purely economic. Average wages for production work are low and unstable. Occupational mobility and advancement are limited. These factors combine with high injury and illness rates to create high worker turnover. Worker turnover causes turnover in the communities and schools, which in turn fosters other problems.

The economics of meatpacking work are not sufficient to explain employee turnover. After all, Cornland maintained a stable labor force in comparison to IBP's. Most of the workers we interviewed complained of poor relations with management. They cited lack of recognition and respect, inadequate representation, and poor communication (including, but not limited to, language barriers) as serious problems (see Stull, Erickson, and Giner, 1996).

What can be done to improve the context of reception? IBP management has made a concerted effort to participate in community organizations. This is a necessary ingredient to a successful context of reception, but it is not enough. IBP's presence in Lexington continues to present serious challenges to the community. The people of Lexington must find a way to represent their needs to IBP and work with company representatives to address them.

If there is a failing in the community's efforts to understand and meet the challenges arising from IBP's presence, it is in its inability to deal with the linkage between community problems, instability of the immigrant stream, and the nature of IBP's work environment. The community has provided a very positive reception for IBP, and today the plant is dependent on the community for its continued growth. Communities across the country which, like Lexington, have opened their doors to new industries, are beginning to take a more active role in articulating policies for corporate responsibility that include the treatment of their fellow community members working in these industries. Having established a positive context of reception, the time is right for Lexington to expand its activities to guarantee a positive context for future settlement and growth. Dealing with the work-community relationship is critical for the years ahead.

2. Create Economic Development Beyond IBP.

IBP will continue to provide jobs and economic growth in Lexington. However, strategies for economic development should target creation of better paying and less strenuous jobs to complement those in meatpacking. Immigrants come to Lexington with a bundle of energy and a solid work ethic. A few eventually move out of meatpacking to take other jobs or start their own businesses; but for most, meatpacking represents the only employment possibility. Latina immigrant women are particularly affected by the lack of alternative employment in Lexington as evidenced, among other things, by the flourishing of an "informal economy" of very small, home-based businesses and personal services established by women attempting to complement their household income. A constant complaint among the Latina

women interviewed during the last six years has been the lack of employment possibilities which adds to their hesitancy to make a long-term commitment to remain in Lexington. By redirecting efforts toward the development of an economic base not centered solely on meatpacking, the community can diminish the risk of economic stagnation and social instability. In this regard, the support for micro-enterprises or Latino businesses is a step in the right direction. And so are educational and training opportunities aimed specifically at Latinas and Latinos.

3. Build for the Second Generation.

In the years to come, Lexington must be able to provide for the children of today's immigrants. As Ruben Rumbaut (1996:1) put it, "the newest second generation may very well be the key to establishing the long-term consequences of the most recent waves of immigration." The widely held belief that assimilation into the American mainstream automatically results in improved economic and social conditions for the children of immigrants must be qualified. Assimilation is more likely to be "segmented." Children who maintain their language and ethnic identity, and whose parents achieve economic and social mobility, do better than those who assimilate into the so-called underclass. The children whose parents are trapped in devalued jobs tend to rebel against their parents and despise the jobs they do, and thus seek other sources of identity and self-respect. This is the kind of pattern associated with self-destructive behavior such as gang formation — a recent concern in Lexington.

The challenges confronting this second generation and the community in which they live are daunting (Rumbaut and Cornelius, 1995). Lexington can learn much from other communities with significant immigrant populations. By the same token, smaller communities such as Lexington are ideal settings for innovative and pilot programs designed to serve the needs of today's immigrants and their children.

Endnotes

1. Targeted Jobs Tax Credit is a federal program that offers tax credits for employers who hire applicants from nine targeted categories, including persons receiving various types of social assistance, ex-offenders, and unemployed youth. Employers may qualify for tax credits up to $2,400 per employee.

2. Hispanics in Lexington are overwhelmingly of Mexican origin, but Central Americans (primarily *Guatemaltecos* and a few *Salvadoreños*) are identifiable and growing. Vietnamese and Laotians predominate among Southeast Asians, but their numbers have remained small. "Anglo" refers to all non-Hispanic Whites, and "non-Hispanic" is often a residual category (containing small numbers of African and Native Americans). The problems associated with such groupings are well known.

3. It is important to underscore the undercount problems which have plagued the U.S. Census whenever it deals with minority populations. The problems are compounded when that population is highly mobile, newly arrived, some members are undocumented, and particularly distrustful of data gathering efforts by the government. The undercount problems, in our case, are also compounded by the fact that, not only did the influx of new Latino populations accelerate after 1990, but it has yet to crest.

4. For a discussion on the gap between perceptions and data regarding Latinos' and, more generally, immigrants' use of welfare, as well as the potential costs of welfare reform for newly arrived Latino families in Nebraska, see Gouveia (1997).

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